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teachers that they must insist on a knowledge of the structure of the language and never neglect the written exercises which alone can give precision and permanency to the acquired portion of the language.

b) *Lack of literary culture in the higher classes.*—As the direct method aims at a more practical knowledge of the language, it follows that the students have less time to be acquainted with the literature, the history, and the geography of the country whose language they are learning. It seems that this is a general deficiency. However, it must not be imputed to the direct method, but rather to another false understanding of it on the part of the teachers. Too many of them have the idea that the students must be, above all, able to speak on matters familiar to a commercial traveler. There are other more profitable subjects of conversation in the classroom than eating and shopping.

As the conditions in our American schools and colleges are entirely different from those in the French schools, it will be of little use to mention the remedies proposed in France for these evils. It belongs to each country to find adequate means to suppress them.

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## THE TEACHING OF FRENCH IN THE UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL<sup>1</sup>

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The University High School is an experiment station where the teachers are permitted—rather I should say, encouraged—to seek in their practice the best possible way of giving their particular subject to the student. We in the French department think that we are working out what has already proved, and will increasingly prove to be a successful method.

We believe that the successful teaching of a modern language means giving the student a working knowledge from the

<sup>1</sup> Read before the French Conference, held in connection with the Twentieth Educational Conference of the Academies and High Schools in Relations with the University of Chicago, November 8, 1907.

beginning, that is, that his knowledge and his speaking ability are coextensive to a great extent.

It means, secondly, that what he is taught in any one year will be a satisfactory basis for further work either in this country or in France, and that implies accuracy in knowledge.

Our desired goal is, then, the accurate use of the language in proportion to knowledge of vocabulary and construction. The story of our advance thitherward is in the following lines:

The acquirement of the language is considered from two points of view—vocabulary and the use of vocabulary, which must go hand in hand. Accidence and syntax will be but servitors in the process. He who knows the last word on grammar is not necessarily able to speak the language, but he who speaks it accurately knows how to use the rules of grammar, he is their master. Grammar is with us therefore only a means to an end, and is never taught apart but incidentally as need arises for expression and understanding. It must be borne in mind, however, that the vocabulary is administered in such a way that by the end of the first year the elements of grammar have been covered *en passant*, the student having discovered most of them for himself—as is planned. In order to speak the language from the beginning the student and the teacher must humble themselves to talk about the objects of the room, weather, time, etc., and on these stepping-stones of simple ideas they will slowly and systematically rise to higher themes.

I have said that the student uses the language. I mean by that that he speaks it, writes it, and understands it when spoken or printed—always within the limits of the course. This practical mastery of the language is necessary, we think, for the best appreciation of the literature and spirit of the French; we know that it is necessary for what the average student wants—a speaking knowledge and the power to understand spoken and written French.

As I indicated above, the teacher must adapt his vocabulary to the knowledge of the class; he must increase and vary it in proportion to the needs of the class, from week to week, month to month until in the third and fourth years he may give

himself a free hand; bearing in mind, however, even then the student's vocabulary, and explaining new words and phrases. Upon the carrying out of this work of logical and inevitable development depends much of the success of the method. If the teacher be too slow in increasing the vocabulary and ideas, the student becomes discouraged because he is not sufficiently stimulated; if on the other hand the teacher rushes ahead too rapidly, the student becomes confused and there results inaccurate understanding, which is of all things most to be dreaded.

And now I proceed to the first day of the first year. I ask the student what he hopes to get out of the work. Invariably it is the practical knowledge, so that he may speak, write, understand lectures and conversation, enjoy plays and works, get about in France.

I then explain to him how he may accomplish his desires, I will tell him that his intelligent co-operation is necessary for the success of the scheme—a truism of course, but I apply it to what I call the *visualizing process*, viz., the attaching of the word directly to the object, idea, or action, whether the word be learned in that way or through the English medium. This process becomes soon a habit. Here, be it noted, when possible the direct method (not via the English) should be used, as it is both economical in point of time, and keeps one in the spirit of the language. Also, I continue, when alone, the student is to review mentally his knowledge. As he walks along the street he will say to himself: This is a tree; it has branches; I see a man, etc., according to his vocabulary. A little later he will be able to hold silent conversation between himself and an imaginary person, pronouncing mentally the words. And all of this he must do aloud at home. This is his part of the work, both in the first and second year—his way to study. As he carries out this work, so will his progress be. He will get his material in the classroom. He must so reiterate it that he gains fluency—fluency with the background of accuracy. He must observe carefully *at first*; the first impression is the one that stays.

That the student should understand, remember, and apply

the above is very important. I have him repeat these ideas and we hark back to them again and again.

Then we attack the pronunciation problem. We gather together the vowel sounds, nasals, and diphthongs, using phonetics only to help get at the production of the sound. I have the student write out words on the board—mere sounds to him. On the second day we begin the acquirement of the vocabulary, words and then sentences from the beginning. All future progress depends upon the start. If the student gets these elements inaccurately, the rest is, both for student and teacher, mere tilting at windmills.

The student receives a printed page containing the matter of the lesson, first gone over by the teacher, and he places over against it the collateral notes of the day. There are twenty of these lesson sheets, and they imply about six weeks' work—more or less according to the average ability of the class. I may add that until this year the teacher has written everything on the board and the student has copied it.

At the end of the six weeks the student will have learned in the way stated above, to speak, to write, to understand by ear or eye the amount of French that has for ground-work the following: The present tense (in all forms) of the regular and of 30 irregular verbs; the reflexive verb; the articles; the adjectives, possessive, demonstrative; adjectives of number, of color, of dimensions, etc; the ordinary inflexions of adjectives; the partitive; prepositions of place, with countries; adverbs of quantity; negations; personal pronouns (including all but *soi*); interrogative pronouns; the relative in part; ordinary inflexions for the plural; use of accents; *liaison*; syllabification. And this has been gained in connection with the suitable sentences—questions and statements necessary for talking about: objects of room, rooms of house, body, clothes, countries (a few), the student's work, the classification of things (grammatical), family, state, time, weather, money, ordinary actions of daily life, the programme of the day ("I waken at 6 o'clock; I rise, wash, breakfast, etc.").

We then take up, together for variety, *Easy French* by Snow

and Lebon and *Lectures Faciles* by Jules Lazare. The former contains stories with questionnaires and English exercises based thereupon, and with these begins our prose composition. In addition I give them also the translation of simple, everyday English sentences. Narration, too, begins at this point, for the student must give written and oral résumés, first in detail and then more general, of the stories read.

Lazare's book contains object-lessons, useful from the conversational point of view more especially, and anecdotes, good for narration. From both sections the student will learn by heart.

With these texts the rest of the "grammar" has been secured: as to the verb, first the future, then the past indefinite, the imperfect, etc. The subjunctive mood is taken up about half-way through the third term. The same thirty or so irregular verbs are followed through their various deviations. The text for the grammar, a summing up simply, is put into the hands of the student toward the end of the second term. We use Lawless' *Elements*. During the second and third term I relate to the student little incidents or stories, apart from their text, and these they reproduce: this is the beginning of preparation for the understanding of discourse.

Now, this is first-year work and it covers the required work for college entrance; in addition our student will have gained a familiarity with the spoken language (within the limitations of subject and construction as set forth above). To some students in the first year (those who desire and are equal to it) I give outside reading during the third term. This they report upon to me orally and in writing.

I hope that I have made it clearly understood that the conversational work is systematized and not haphazard, and that the pupils write and have practice in writing it.

The work of the second year is of the same general character. The student will widen his vocabulary, will need therefore the same steady drill, will complete incidentally the elements of grammar, will study a little poetry. There is more advanced prose composition, a systematic gathering up of idiomatic expres-

sions, the student forms his own book of the subjunctive from texts, there is systematized conversation of a wider scope, writing out of imaginary dialogues, simple letters, translations of English apart from text, based on conversation, and conversation between two members of the class while we listen to note and criticize. This last sounds very artificial but works out quite well. For texts we use just now: *Cle'd'or* or *Sans familles, tour du monde*, half of which we do in class. The other half is done at home by the student and reported upon orally and in writing, once a week. This is the real beginning of outside reading, which varies in amount according to ability and desire of the student. During the second and third terms we take up *Trois contes* (Daudet), *Contes et nouvelles* (Lazare), plays of Labiche, *Douze contes* (Fontane), *Lyrics* (Canfield, Bowen, or *Les cent meilleurs poèmes lyriques de la langue française*). For prose composition we use *Intermediate French* (Jaques); for grammar (Lawless, Bruce, Fraser, Squair, for reference). The books for outside reading vary with the student and class.

As to the conversational French, I have at different times used Kohn, Newson's version, and a regular conversation book of Garpey or Sauer, any one of which will be of benefit to the intelligent student who will really grind at it. But what I most count on is the daily drill.

I should perhaps state here that one of my colleagues, Miss Parcot, who is this year away on leave of absence, does not agree with the other members of the department with regard to translation. In her classes therefore she takes it up only with students she is preparing for college, and with them as extra work toward the end of the year. She believes in the method which contemns any word of English in the classroom.

The third year continues the study of the language as a language to be used, and begins literature as literature. The course on the nineteenth century is so given that the student may gain as a result of his efforts some appreciation of the French spirit, its expression in literature and life. As we read a book we speak of the author, of his ideas; we note where the viewpoint is essentially French, or at least different from ours; we

speak of their customs; express our opinions, student and teacher, of the text; I read to them criticisms (Lemaître, France, Fagnet) of our writer, especially when my opinion is contrary to the critic's. We read of the achievements (art, literature, and science) of the French, and thus get rid of the prevailing idea that the French are wholly given over to frivolity and rioting. We try to appreciate recent efforts toward better living; we learn to be lenient with faults that are not ours as a nation, remembering that we have our own, and in so coming to understand, even in part, another civilization the student will gain in imagination, in reason, in taste; he will have a kindlier, more intelligent spirit: which things, added to the inevitable gain during the first part of work, of simplicity of spirit, perserverance, respect for thoroughness, i. e., the truth, form a total much to be desired.

And now to take up briefly some questions arising from this statement.

1. *Translation* from English to French I believe to be a good thing for accuracy, for fluency, and for convenience in actual practice. Translation from French to English I indulge in only as a test of the student's knowledge from two points of view: Does he understand the meaning and construction of the individual word? Does he understand the meaning and sense of the passage? I intend that he shall understand exactly what he reads, not only the general drift.

2. *As to the classics*, they come in the fourth year, although I should not object to reading two or three plays in the third year.

3. *The question of home-work* has been already indicated. In first-year work especially it must be done aloud, and the keynote is *repetition*. I tell the student that I will give as short a lesson as need be, but that he must drill, grind at it over and over again. With text-work he must first understand thoroughly (a dictionary is of course necessary), then forget the English and keep the idea in French. In the second year, now, after four weeks' work, I am giving about a page a day on an



average, and in connection, reproduction, prose composition, questionnaires, verb drill, etc.

4. I have said that *French is the language of the classroom*. It is, but we do not hesitate to use English to explain a word or difficult idea, the subjunctive, the use of the pasts, for example. Then when the idea is grasped, we turn it into French.

5. *The number in the class*.—For the learning of a language the fewer the better: but fifteen is very fair; twenty is not so good. *I have worked* with a class of 40, which did as good work as my smaller ones, but it is too hard work for the teacher.

6. As yet I have said nothing about the slow pupil, and he is a very important factor in the work. The *slow student* (not the defective), the one who needs two years' work where his fellow needs one, will fail in the ordinary class. He will get the so-much-to-be-condemned smattering, the inaccurate knowledge. This student should not be so sacrificed. As soon as the teacher finds out his ability, he should be transferred to a class where there is a possibility of his doing good work if the matter be administered to him slowly. I urge, therefore, the fair treatment by the schools of this class of students. In our school there is a certain leeway—but not as yet enough.

7. Now, in closing, a word about the different methods. During ten years' teaching here and in Montreal, I have tried various ones: the translation and grammar methods, that one in which all English is repudiated, various combinations, and now the one which I have tried to set forth today and which I say unhesitatingly has given much the best results. I will add, however, that the expenditure of nervous vitality is much greater when teaching in this way. And this is inevitable, I think. Excessive clearness of enunciation, so that the student may hear exactly, the keenest listening to control the student's pronunciation, the close watching of his expression in order to give the explanation at the right moment, the bearing in mind the particular vocabulary of the particular class at the particular moment, the never-ending repetition, and the encouragement

absolutely necessary for the student's progress—all these, are, I say, life-depleting to a greater extent than is realized. For this reason, I would urge upon the schools that the teacher of a modern language be especially cared for with regard to number of hours' work and number of students in class. He cannot otherwise do good work.